

## NATIONAL GMDSS IMPLEMENTATION TASK FORCE

Newsletter and Summary Record of 11 May 2006 Meeting

1. **The Summary Record.** This summary record is provided for information and will be posted on the Task Force portion of the Coast Guard web site at [www.navcen.uscg.gov/marcomms/](http://www.navcen.uscg.gov/marcomms/) (click GMDSS, then GMDSS Task Force). The summary record is also distributed to all Task Force members to serve as a Newsletter summarizing GMDSS developments.

The GMDSS Task Force met in Newport Beach, California on 11 May 2006 during the RTCM Annual Assembly. The documents listed below were distributed and copies are available on request.

FCC Public Notice DA 06-967 on Revised GMDSS Question Pools  
FCC Public Notice DA 06-962 on Request for Waiver on DSC PLB  
USCG SAR Data Statistics for FY 2003 and FY 2004  
IMO MSC.4/Circ.81 of 22 March 2006 on Acts of Piracy and Armed Robbery  
Equipped to Survive Foundation Report on GPS Equipped EPIRBs  
Report from RADM Gilbert on IMO Reaction to U.S. Paper on Cell Phone Use  
Report from RADM Gilbert on IMO's Action on SART Alternatives  
UK Department of Transport News Release on their E-Navigation Initiative  
RTCM Paper on Status of Long Range Tracking and Identification (LRIT)  
Draft Letter to the Coast Guard Recommending National Legislation to require  
All craft offshore to carry VHF Radio or EPIRB/PLB

2. **Summary Record.** The Summary Record of the 5 January 2006 Task Force meeting was approved. A copy of the Summary Record is posted on the website.

3. **The Coast Guard Reports:**

**a. Decisions of COMSAR 10.** Russ Levin and others outlined the major results of the COMSAR 10 meeting in February, 2006, COMSAR 11 will meet in London 19-23 February 2007. Highlights of the COMSAR 10 Conference are as follows:

1). The Search and Rescue Transponder (SART) and EPIRB specifications were reviewed and a Japanese paper recommending Circular Polarization was approved. The U.S. paper recommending that Class B AIS be deemed equivalent to a SART was approved and these changes should be finalized when approved by the parent Maritime Safety Committee (MSC).

2). The Search and Rescue Working Group came to agreement on definition of a major SAR incident and noted time required to evacuate large cruise ships. Guide Lines for operations in remote areas included carriage of recovery equipment.

3). The U.S. paper on increasing use of cell phones resulted in several recommendations by COMSAR including a continuing emphasis on the superiority of GMDSS systems such as VHF Radio. Recognition of the increasing volume of cell phone distress alerts prompted other recommendations such as enabling SAR Mission Coordinators to better locate cell phone alerts; encouraging SAR authorities to introduce streamlined routing of cell phone alerts direct to the responsible RCC; and encouraging administrations to implement free 911 type calls for cell phone emergency calls. Ironically, shortly after the Task Force meeting, the Coast Guard decided to terminate the streamlined '\*CG' calls in the U.S. since they were often misrouted causing extended delays and were not uniformly available.

4). IMO/COMSAR established a joint IMO/IHO/WMO Correspondence Group on the Worldwide Navigational Warning Service (WWNWS) Arctic Expansion that will chaired by Peter Doherty of NGA.

**b. Upgrade of MF Coastal Network to DSC for Sea Area A2.** Russ Levin reported that the shore facilities still needed antenna upgrades. The prototype upgrade facility in New Orleans was lost during Hurricane Katrina. Cutters have a requirement for MF-DSC capability but are not yet equipped to maintain watch on the DSC calling channel. In response to a question, he confirmed that all shore stations were nominally operational on MF-DSC but that incomplete antenna system upgrades would limit the effective range. Russ also reported that the Coast Guard was planning to contract for a market survey of the users of their various HF broadcasting services, voice, narrow band direct printing, and fax. Completion in 150 days is expected.

**c. Status Report on Rescue 21 – DSC for Sea Area A1.** No representative of the Rescue 21 VHF-DSC Acquisition Project was available to respond to questions but the status is the same as reported at the January meeting. A question was raised as to the Coast Guard plans to equip their boats with VHF-DSC in view of program changes to delete that work from the General Dynamics contract. The response from the staff after the meeting indicated that Rescue 21 had been tasked with upgrading approximately 300 boats and cutters using Coast Guard resources for the installation. The remaining boats and cutters will be upgraded with funds from other projects such as Deepwater. The last reported date for completion of the CONUS portion of the project is 2011 which reflects the project cost and schedule overruns encountered. In this regard the General Accounting Office (GAO) in May issued a highly critical report on the project citing the Coast Guard's "failure to follow a rigorous requirements management process" and the Contractor's "underestimating the time required to complete key tasks." The full 58 page GAO Report to Congress can be viewed at [www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-06-623](http://www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-06-623)

**d. Current Status of Automatic Identification Systems (AIS).** Jorge Arroyo provided an update on AIS developments including the following highlights:

(1) The Federal Government Unified Regulatory Agenda published 24 April 2006 in the Federal Register announced plans for a Notice of Proposed Rule Making (NPRM) vice an Interim Rule to expand AIS carriage requirements beyond VTS areas. The NPRM would extend AIS carriage to self propelled vessels of 65 feet and above, tugs of 26 feet and above with 600 horsepower, fishing vessels, dredges, vessels carrying hazardous cargos, high speed passenger vessels and those carrying more than 50 passengers, and any other commercial vessels 65 feet or more - about 17,000 vessels altogether. Release of the NPRM is expectede in October 2006.

(2) Class B AIS will be authorized for these smaller vessels but FCC Type Approval is required for the Class B AIS equipments. The IEC approved the specification for Class B AIS on 20 March 2006.

(3) With respect to Electronic Chart Systems (ECS), The International Electro-technical Committee (IEC) should complete work on a proposed minimum standard soon. Congress has imposed a deadline of 1 January 2007 for the Coast Guard to define requirements for electronic chart systems, and assumes that they will also call for display of AIS information. See also paragraph 9.b. below on the new E-Navigation initiative.

(4) Captain Ed Thiedeman indicated that the Coast Guard expects to have a receive-only AIS coastal monitoring system within 2-3 years.

(5) Mexico has published a NPRM that would require recreational vessels over 30 feet in length to carry AIS equipment and an annual fee of \$30.00 for participation.

**e. IMO Initiative for Long Range Identification and Tracking (LRIT).** Bob Markle, as Chairman of the LRIT Working Group at COMSAR, summarized progress on this project at the meeting. Most technical issues were resolved as follows:

(1) The distance offshore to which Coastal States were entitled to receive tracking data was not resolved by COMSAR which had proposals ranging from 200 to 2000 miles. The parent Maritime Safety Committee which met later in May, settled this policy issue at 1000 miles.

(2) There was agreement that ships sailing in Sea Area A1 could rely solely on AIS equipment. This would apply whether or not the coastal state had implemented Sea Area A1 (not likely in the U.S. before 2011).

(3) There appears to be agreement that ships sailing farther offshore could use any tracking system which complied with the technical parameters. In this respect the carriage

requirement would be similar to that for the Ship Security Alerting System (SSAS) for which ships can carry any system which meets the alerting requirements.

**4. The FCC Reports:** Ghassan Khalek reported for the FCC. The following are highlights of his report.

**a. Status of Part 80 Continuing Rule Making Proceedings.** There has been no change since the last meeting with regard to the numerous outstanding items which are pending completion.

**b. Briartek Waiver Request for DSC Personal Locater Beacon.** The FCC issued Public Notice DA 06-962 soliciting comments on a request from Briartek to waive a section of the FCC Rules to permit certification of a new Class B EPIRB transmitting on VHF channel 70 with a DSC emission. The device is intended to alert the home ship of a man overboard situation and meets specifications developed by RTCM SC-119 on Survivor Locating Devices. Comments were due to the FCC on 1 June 2006.

**c. Implementation of new GMDSS Question Pools.** The FCC released Public Notice DA 06-967 soliciting comments in updating the Question Pools used for GMDSS examinations. This is the response to the Task Force recommended updates approved at our January meeting. New proposals are not really expected since the Task Force update project used input from all interested parties. Comments were due at the FCC by 1 June and reply comments on 16 June. The Task Force filed supporting comments on 31 May 2006, a copy of the Task Force comment has been placed on our web site.

**d. Carryover Issue: Can Recreational Vessels keep existing no-fee MMSI when applying for a Station License?** This issue has been raised by vessels having a BOATUS issued MMSI but desiring to get an FCC Station License in compliance with the Rule that requires the Station License for international voyages. Ghassan Khalek acknowledged that the Universal Licensing System (ULS) would not accept an existing MMSI not issued by the FCC and insisted on assigning a new MMSI. It was decided earlier that the Task Force should petition to have the ULS modified to accept these existing MMSI's. This was done following our January meeting but there has been no official response from the FCC. Ghassan explained that they were still trying to work out a way to implement the recommendation. See also the discussion of MMSI problems later in paragraph 7.b.(1),(2), and (3).

**5. The GMDSS Modernization Initiative.** RADM Ed Gilbert provided two printed status reports on the Task Force's initiative concerning GMDSS modernization. The first dealt with COMSAR's agreement on alternatives to the SART summarized in paragraph 3.a.(1) above. The second dealt with COMSAR's reactions to the U.S. paper on cell phone usage for SAR alerts which was summarized in paragraph 3.a.(3) above. The Modernization Group remains open to new suggestions from the membership and will continue its review of potential GMDSS updates for consideration by the Task Force.

**6. The RTCM Report:** RTCM President Bob Markle reminded members that the 2007 RTCM Assembly will be in St. Petersburg Beach, Florida May 6-12. Other items include three new Special Committees. Interested RTCM members may indicate to RTCM that they wish to be affiliated with any of these new efforts:

**a. VHF Data Interface Standards.** As reported previously, the RTCM Board approved this new study effort and designated the new Special Committee as SC-123.

**b. High Frequency Users Group.** The RTCM approved this new initiative to counter pressure expected at WARC-07 to transfer some high frequency spectrum from 'Mobile' to 'Broadcasting'. This study effort was designated Special Committee S.C. 124.

**c. Integration of Above Deck Antennas.** The RTCM Board also approved this new study effort and designated the new Special Committee as S.C. 125

**7. The Recreational Vessel Group Report:** Chuck Husick led the discussion for the Recreational Vessel Group which included the following highlights:

**a. DSC Tutorial:** The Task Force has been following the development of a DSC tutorial by the BOAT U.S. Foundation under a Coast Guard grant. The program is being developed by Chuck Husick who reports that it is essentially complete except for conversion to web site and CD format which has now been funded. The tutorial runs 38 minutes and can be offered to manufacturers to personalize with their own hardware pictures and perhaps package with their VHF products for sale.

**b. NASBLA Draft Model Act on VHF and/or EPIRBs for all Vessels Going More than 1 Mile Offshore:** The Task Force has lent its support to development of the Model Act in the hope that many or most coastal states might enact the legislation. An informal survey of 10 of the 28 coastal state administrators taken just before the Task Force meeting revealed the following:

(1) All of the administrators are aware of the Model Act and support its objectives

(2) None of those surveyed has yet recommended legislation to adopt the Model Act for a variety of reasons (election year, date for new legislative proposals has passed, doubt passage without compelling data or a strong endorsement from the Coast Guard)

(3) Most would prefer a uniform national law to fragmented and non-uniform state laws in view of the mobility of trailered boats, 3 mile limits of state enforcement etc.

Accordingly, the Task Force approved a Draft Letter to the Coast Guard recommending preemption of state authority and, if needed, a legislative proposal to Congress

for the authority to create a national requirement. The letter was released 31 May 2006, and a copy has been placed on our web site.

**c. MMSI Assignment Policy Report:** There are a number of issues related to MMSI Assignment Policy which were addressed at the meeting:

(1) BOATUS has assigned MMSI numbers to over 28,000 boat operators whereas the FCC appears to have issued about 120,000. Since it is unlikely that all of those issued by the FCC are active, the FCC agreed to work with an ad hoc group in a review of their assignment policy and other MMSI issues.

(2) As noted in the FCC Report in paragraph 4.c. above, they have yet to act of the petition from the Task Force asking that boaters holding a BOAT US MMSI number be permitted to retain it when applying for a Station License.

(3) As reported at the January meeting, it appears that about 70% of the DSC radios in use have a DSC capability but the vast majority of these have not applied for an MMSI number. The Task Force decided that a campaign should be undertaken to explain the benefits of using DSC without waiting for the Coast Guard to complete Rescue 21 (now scheduled for 2011 or later). It was also decided that the Task Force should publicize the availability of DSC service in coastal areas where Rescue 21 stations have been declared operational. The Coast Guard Auxiliary and U.S. Power Squadron representatives agreed to include these initiatives in their courtesy inspection and training program. The Power Squadrons have applied to the FCC to become a MMSI issuing organization.

(4) Jim Davis and Joe Stevens of the Coast Guard Auxiliary in San Diego demonstrated a DSC training device they had developed and were using at Boat Shows etc. This is another very useful approach to getting the DSC message out to boaters. The Task Force will recommend to the Rescue 21 staff that they consider this for their public outreach program.

**d.** Charlie Zaloom of Sea Tow answered questions about their new “Sea Smart” VHF Public Correspondence Service for members. He made an excellent presentation to the RTCM earlier in the week and details of the new service are available on the website at [www.seatow.com](http://www.seatow.com). The Task Force welcomed the renewed availability of VHF Public Correspondence which is a basic GMDSS functional requirement.

**e. New U. S. Power Squadrons GMDSS Handbook.** Walt Fields of the U.S. Power Squadrons introduced a new handbook entitled THE BOATOWNERS GUIDE TO GMDSS AND MARINE RADIO. The Handbook was previously announced during our October 2005 meeting and comes with an interactive CD-ROM guide to using a digital VHF Marine Radio. Those desiring to order a copy should call the McGraw-Hill Customer Service Dept. at 1-800-262-4729. Bookstores should call 1-800-722-4726.

**8. The Report of the GMDSS Service Agents & Manufacturers Group:** A November 2005 report from the Equipped to Survive Foundation was distributed for information. They had conducted field tests on EPIRBs to determine if those with GPS receivers were providing reliable location data. Since one of the McMurdo EPIRBs and a McMurdo Marine PLB provided poor locating data during that test, another field test was scheduled to determine if the manufacturer's modifications were successful. The report indicates that the upgraded McMurdo EPIRB and Marine PLB provided good locating data as did a new prototype Marine PLB from ACR.

**9. The Report of the GMDSS Commercial Vessel Group:** There were a few issues relating to the Commercial Vessel Group which were discussed briefly at the meeting:

**a. IMO Report on Acts of Piracy and Armed Robbery Against Ships.** The IMO Annual Report (MSC.4/Circ.81 of 22 March 2006) was distributed for information. In 2005 there were 266 acts of piracy and armed robbery reported, a decrease of 64 (19%) from 2004. The areas most affected were in the Far East, in particular in the South China Sea, the Malacca Strait, West Africa, South American, and the Caribbean. In addition the data showed an increased number of incidents in East Africa and the Indian Ocean.

**b. New E-Navigation Initiatives Emerging.** A UK Department of Transport Release on E-Navigation was distributed for information. The European Union (EU) has adopted legislation to utilize AIS data for vessel traffic monitoring including a requirement for a shore based infrastructure for receiving and utilizing the data collected. The United Kingdom has adopted a strategy which goes beyond the EU's Directive and includes recognition of E-Navigation's potential for policing reporting areas, assisting Search & Rescue, countering pollution, use as an Aid to Navigation, a Safety Information System, a Traffic Database, and facilitation of incident investigations. The UK, supported by Japan, the Netherlands, Norway, Singapore, and the U.S, has proposed that the IMO's Maritime Safety Committee adopt a work program for a wholly integrated electronic navigation concept to transform shipping safety.

**c. Simplified Voyage Data Recorder (S-VDR).** The use of Voyage Data Recorders is being phased in by IMO over a number of years. Interest has been expressed in the development of specifications for a Simplified Voyage Data Recorder for use by cargo vessels in order to reduce the cost of a full VDR installation. The original VDR specifications are still required for passenger ships, tankers, and those carrying hazardous cargo. The simplified VDRs will be required to record Date, Time, Position, Speed, Heading, and AIS information along with other optional parameters. The Task Force will schedule an S-VDR presentation at its August 2006 meeting in the Washington area.

**10. The Report of the GMDSS Training Group:** The revised GMDSS Question Pools approved at the last meeting have yet to be implemented by either the FCC or the Coast Guard's National Maritime Center (NMC). Liaison has been established with NMC to

expedite approval and the FCC has issued a Public Notice requesting comments. The Task Force filed supporting comments before the deadline.

**11. The Next Meeting of the GMDSS Task Force:** The Task Force agreed to meet next at the RTCM headquarters in Washington on Wednesday morning, 2 August 2006. The Task Force meeting will be followed by a meeting of RTCM Special Committee 124 – the HF Users Group which will meet in the same room that afternoon. The day before, the RTCM will host the meeting of U.S. Working Party 8B on the morning of August 1<sup>st</sup>. USWP8B assists the U.S. Delegation in preparation for meetings of ITU-R Working Party 8B on Maritime and Mobile Radiocommunications and radiodetermination. Persons wishing to attend should first contact Darlene Drazenovich at [ddrazenovich@ntia.doc.gov](mailto:ddrazenovich@ntia.doc.gov). The follow-on meeting of the Task Force will be in Naples, Florida on Friday 20 October 2006 during the NMEA Annual Meeting.

## GMDSS TASK FORCE CONTINUING WORK LIST

11 May 2006

1. Monitor FCC continuing action to update GMDSS Rules (TF)
2. Recommend actions to reduce false alerts in GMDSS systems (TF)
3. Monitor Coast Guard Port State GMDSS inspection program (TF)
4. Monitor MSI broadcasting programs for compliance with GMDSS Standards (TF)
5. Review GMDSS Internet Web Sites and update Task Force portion of USCG site (TF)
6. Support SOLAS Working Group planning for IMO COMSAR meetings (TF)
7. Disseminate GMDSS Information Bulletins and IMO GMDSS Documents (TF)
8. Advocate Canadian coordination to extend GMDSS services to the Great Lakes (TF)
9. Review GMDSS concepts and make modernization recommendations (TF)
10. Advocate national regulation requiring VHF or EPIRBs for all vessels offshore (TF)
11. Advocate overhaul of FCC policy and practice on MMSI assignments (TF)
12. Monitor non-GMDSS systems such as AIS, SSAS, VDR, LRIT, & E-Navigation (TF)
13. Encourage AMVER & VOS participation to supplement GMDSS (CV)
14. Publicize availability of NAVTEX receivers without printers for all vessels (CV)
15. Advocate intership calling on HF GMDSS channels (CV)
16. Recommend training programs for non-mandatory users of GMDSS systems (RV)
17. Encourage GMDSS handbooks and Internet and video training aids (RV)
18. Recommend Class 'D' VHF-DSC as superior to RTCM SC-101 format (RV)
19. Advocate FCC enable R/Vs keep existing MMSI when applying for Station Lic. (RV)
20. Encourage Mfgs. to upgrade GMDSS explanations in equipment manuals (SA)
21. Recommend to FCC clarifications to their List of Approved GMDSS Equipment (SA)
22. Monitor guidelines for GMDSS equipment maintenance & maintainer standards (SA)
23. Recommend proper interconnection of GPS receivers with DSC Radios (SA)
24. Maintain GMDSS Question Pools for FCC and Coast Guard Examinations (TR)

Key to cognizant groups:       (TF) Task Force  
  (CV) Commercial Vessel Task Group  
  (RV) Recreational Vessel Task Group  
  (SA) Service Agents and Manufacturers Task Group  
  (TR) Training Task Group

**Please refer questions and proposals to Captain Jack Fuechsel at 703-527-0484 or [gmdss@comcast.net](mailto:gmdss@comcast.net) (note change in phone and further change to email beyond that reported in earlier Newsletters). If you have an Internet server with spam filters, please authorize receipt of messages from [gmdss@comcast.net](mailto:gmdss@comcast.net)**

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